

2. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein a control procedure is performed so that an illustrative sentence of an E-mail for transmission is randomly selected from a plurality of illustrative sentences classed and pre-set depending on the contents of experiences acquired by said agent so that the selected sentence [are] is in a class consistent with the contents of experiences acquired by said agent, the selected sentence being voluntarily sent to the [recipient] user of the agent.

3. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 2 wherein an effective period of said agent is set and an E-mail is voluntarily sent to the [recipient] user of said agent upon expiration of said effective period.

Cancel claims 33 through 48 without prejudice.

49. (Amended) A method of controlling a virtual agent, comprising the steps of:

generating a virtual agent adapted to deliver E-mails and having a plurality of agent parameters, said agent parameters configured to determine [the] a behavior of said virtual agent;

displaying said virtual agent on a display unit;

interacting with said virtual agent on said display unit, including positioning at least a portion of a display of an input device over said virtual agent on said display unit, detecting an input signal from said input device, and modifying the agent parameters

such that said displaying step displays said virtual agent in response to said input signal; and

updating said plurality of agent parameters based on said interacting step such that the behavior of said virtual agent is continuously modified.

Please cancel claim 50 without prejudice.

52. (Amended) The method of claim [50] 49 wherein said input signal includes one of petting said virtual agent and hitting said virtual agent.

Please add the following new claims:

67. (New) An apparatus for controlling a virtual agent, said apparatus comprising:

means for generating a virtual agent adapted to deliver E-mail and having a plurality of agent parameters, said agent parameters configured to determine a behavior of said virtual agent;

a display unit adapted to display said virtual agent;

means for interacting with said virtual agent on said display unit, said interacting means including means for positioning at least a portion of a display of an input device over said virtual agent on said display unit, means for detecting an input signal from said input device, and means for modifying the agent parameters such that said display unit displays said virtual agent in response to said input signal; and

means for updating said plurality of agent parameters using said interacting means such that the behavior of said virtual agent is continuously modified.

68. (New) An apparatus for automatic control of an E-mail transmission, said apparatus comprising:

means for receiving a send command designating the transmission of an E-mail to a recipient;

means for appending a plurality of agent parameters to a main mail text of said E-mail, said agent parameters controlling the behavior of an agent delivering said E-mail;

means for transmitting said E-mail to said recipient;

means for automatically returning an indication when said recipient has received said E-mail; and

means for modifying said agent parameters based on said agent interacting with said recipient.

69. (New) A computer readable medium for controlling a virtual agent, wherein said medium generates a virtual agent adapted to deliver E-mail and having a plurality of agent parameters, said agent parameters are configured to determine a behavior of said virtual agent;

wherein said virtual agent is displayed on a display unit;

wherein said virtual agent interacts on said display unit including positioning at least a portion of a display of an input device over said virtual agent on said display unit,

detecting an input signal from said input device, and modifying the agent parameters such that said display unit displays said agent in response to said input signal; and

wherein said plurality of agent parameters are updated based on said interaction such that the behavior of said virtual agent is continuously modified.

70. (New) A computer readable medium for automatic control of the transmission of an E-mail wherein said medium, on receiving a send command designating the transmission of an E-mail to a recipient, appends a plurality of agent parameters to a main mail text of said E-mail, said agent parameters controlling the behavior of an agent delivering said E-mail;

wherein said E-mail is transmitted to said recipient;

wherein an indicator that said recipient has received said E-mail is automatically returned; and

wherein said agent parameters are modified based on said agent interacting with said recipient.

71. (New) A method for providing a virtual agent, said method comprising the steps of:

storing a first agent parameter controlling a first agent kept by a first person on a first computer operated by said first person;

storing a first image data of said first agent on said first computer;

storing a second image data of a second agent being kept by a second person on said first computer;

displaying said first agent on a first screen connected to said first computer based on said first image data and said first agent parameter; and

sending said first agent parameter to said first computer through a communication network using E-mail.

72. (New) The method according to claim 71 wherein said first agent is displayed as an animated character.

73. (New) The method according to claim 71 further including receiving a second agent parameter controlling a second agent kept by said second person through the communication network using E-mail and displaying said second agent on said first screen connected to said first computer based on said second image data and said second agent parameter.

74. (New) The method according to claim 71 further including detecting a first event corresponding to said first agent and updating said first agent parameter with said detected first event.

75. (New) The method according to claim 73 further including detecting a second event corresponding to said second agent and updating said second agent parameter with said detected second event.

76. (New) A method according to claim 71 further including randomly generating said first agent parameter.

77. (New) A method of providing a virtual agent, said method comprising the steps of:

storing a first agent parameter in a first storage device, said first agent parameter controlling a first virtual agent adapted to deliver E-mail kept by a first person;

transferring said first agent parameter from said first storage device to a first memory device for controlling said first agent at a first computer operated by said first person; and

sending said first agent parameter from said first memory device to a second computer remote from both said first storage device and said first computer through a communication network.

78. (New) The method according to claim 77 wherein said first agent parameter is sent from said first memory device to a remote computer without passing through said first storage device.

79. (New) The method according to claim 77 wherein said first agent parameter is sent from said first memory device to a remote computer through an Internet service provider.

80. (New) The method according to claim 77 wherein said first storage device is a hard disk drive.

81. (New) The method according to claim 77 wherein said first memory device is random access memory.

82. (New) The method according to claim 77 further including randomly generating said first agent parameter.

83. (New) A method of providing a virtual agent, said method comprising the steps of:

    sending a first agent parameter at a first computer operated by a first person to a second computer remote from said first computer using E-mail through a communication network, wherein said second computer is operated by a second person and said first agent parameter controls a first agent kept by said first person;

    receiving said first agent parameter sent from said second computer at said first computer;

    receiving a second agent parameter sent from said second computer at said first computer, said second agent parameter controlling a second virtual agent kept by said second person; and

    sending said received second agent parameter to said second computer using said first computer.

84. (New) The method according to claim 83 further including processing said first agent parameter to execute said first agent at said first computer.

85. (New) The method according to claim 83 further including processing said second agent parameter to execute said second agent at said first computer.

86. (New) The method according to claim 83 further including detecting a first event corresponding to said first agent and updating said first agent parameter with said detected event.

87. (New) The method according to claim 83 further including detecting a second event corresponding to said second agent and updating said second agent parameter with said detected event.

88. (New) The method according to claim 86 wherein said first event is a first interaction between said first agent and said second agent.

89. (New) The method according to claim 86 wherein said first event is a second interaction between said first agent and an operation by said first person.

90. (New) The method according to 87 wherein said second event is a third interaction between said second agent and said first agent.

91. (New) The method according to 87 wherein said second event is a fourth interaction between said second agent and an operation by said first person.

92. (New) The method according to claim 83 further including randomly generating said first agent parameter.

93. (New) A method of providing a virtual agent, said method comprising the steps of:

detecting one or more events corresponding to a first virtual agent adapted to deliver E-mail, wherein the behavior of said first virtual agent is determined by a plurality of first agent parameters;

updating said plurality of first agent parameters based on a current first agent parameter with each detected event such that the behavior of said first virtual agent is continuously modified with each detected event; and

wherein said events include an interaction between said first virtual agent and a second virtual agent controlled by a second agent parameter and an interaction between said first virtual agent and an operation by an operator.

94. (New) The method according to claim 93 further including receiving said second agent parameter through a communication network.

95. (New) The method according to claim 93 further including updating said second agent parameter.

96. (New) The method according to claim 95 further including sending said updated second agent parameter through a communication network.

97. (New) The method according to claim 93 further including sending said first agent parameters through a communication network.

98. (New) The method according to claim 93 further including randomly generating said first agent parameters.

99. (New) A method of providing an agent, said method comprising the steps of:

randomly generating an agent parameter which is configured to determine a behavior of an agent adapted to deliver E-mail; and  
storing said agent in a memory device.

100. (New) The method according to claim 99 further including sending said agent parameter through a communication network using an E-mail.

101. (New) The method according to claim 99 further including updating said agent parameter according to an event.

102. (New) The method according to claim 100 further including receiving said sent agent parameter.

103. (New) The method according to claim 99 further including displaying said agent on a display unit.

104. (New) The method according to claim 103 wherein said agent is displayed as an animated character.

105. (New) A method of providing an agent, said method comprising the steps of:

storing a first agent software;

storing an agent parameter controlling a behavior of an agent;

executing said first agent software using said agent parameter to control the behavior of the agent; and

sending said agent parameter using E-mail to a remote computer storing a second agent software which is substantially the same as said first agent software so that said second agent software can be executed using said agent parameter to control the behavior of the agent.

106. (New) The method according to claim 105 further including receiving said agent parameter from said remote computer.

107. (New) A method of controlling a virtual agent, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a virtual agent having a plurality of agent parameters, said agent parameters configured to determine the behavior of said virtual agent;

sending said agent parameters to a recipient through a network using E-mail;

setting a state of said virtual agent to an absent state corresponding to said sending step; and

selectively displaying said virtual agent on the display unit according to said state wherein said virtual agent is displayed on a display unit when said state represents other than said absent state.

108. (New) The method of claim 107 further including receiving said agent parameters through the network, setting the state of said virtual agent to an existing state corresponding to said receiving step, and selectively displaying said virtual pet on the display unit according to said state wherein said virtual pet is displayed on a display unit when said state represents said existing state.

109. (New) The method of claim 108 wherein said received agent parameters have been modified.

110. (New) The method of claim 109 wherein said received agent parameters have been continuously modified.

111. (New) The method of claim 107 wherein said agent parameters include sending date and time information, and setting the state of said virtual agent to an existing state after a lapse of pre-set time based on the sending date and time information.

112. (New) An apparatus for providing a virtual agent, said apparatus comprising:

means for storing a first agent parameter controlling a first agent kept by a first person on a first computer kept by said first person;

means for storing a first image data of said first agent on said first computer;

means for storing a second image data of a second agent kept by second person on said first computer;

a display unit connected to said first computer adapted to display said first agent on a first screen based on said first image data and said first agent parameter; and

means for sending said first agent parameter to said first computer through a communication network using E-mail.

113. (New) An apparatus for providing a virtual agent, said apparatus comprising:

means for storing a first agent parameter in a first storage device, said first agent parameter controlling a first virtual agent kept by a first person;

means for transferring said first agent parameter from said first storage device to a first memory for controlling said first agent at a first computer operated by said first person; and

means for sending said first agent parameter from said first memory to a second computer remote from both said first storage device and said first computer through a communication network using E-mail.

114. (New) An apparatus for providing a virtual agent, said apparatus comprising:

means for sending a first agent parameter at a first computer operated by a first person to a second computer remote from said first computer through a communication network using E-mail, wherein said second computer is operated by a second person and said first agent parameter controls a first agent kept by said first person;

means for receiving said first agent parameter sent from said second computer using said first computer;

means for receiving a second agent parameter sent from second computer at said first computer, said second agent parameter controlling a second virtual agent kept by said second person; and

means for sending a received said second agent parameter to said second computer using said first computer.

115. (New) An apparatus for providing a virtual agent, said apparatus comprising:

means for detecting one or more events corresponding to a first virtual agent adapted to deliver an E-mail, wherein the behavior of said first virtual agent is determined by a plurality of first agent parameters;

means for updating said plurality of first agent parameters based on a current first agent parameter with each detected event such that the behavior of said first virtual agent is continuously modified with each detected event; and

means for interacting said first virtual agent with a second virtual agent controlled by a second agent parameter and said first virtual agent with an operation by an operator.

116. (New) An apparatus for providing an agent, said apparatus comprising:

means for randomly generating an agent parameter which is configured to determine a behavior of an agent and adapted to deliver E-mail; and

means for storing said agent in a memory device.

117. (New) An apparatus for providing an agent, said apparatus comprising:

means for storing a first agent software;

means for storing an agent parameter controlling a behavior of an agent;

means for executing said first agent software using said agent parameter to control the behavior of said agent; and

means for sending said agent parameter using E-mail to a remote computer storing a second agent software which is substantially the same as said first agent

software so that said second software can be executed using said agent parameter to control the behavior of the agent.

118. (New) An apparatus for controlling a virtual agent, said apparatus comprising:

means for providing a virtual agent having a plurality of agent parameters, said agent parameters configured to determine the behavior of said virtual agent;

means for sending said agent parameters to a recipient through a network using E-mail;

means for setting a state of said virtual agent to an absent state corresponding to said sending means sending said agent parameters; and

means for selectively displaying said virtual agent on the display unit according to said state connected to a display unit wherein said virtual agent is displayed when said state is other than said absent state.

119. (New) A computer readable medium for providing a virtual agent, wherein said medium stores a first agent parameter controlling a first agent kept by a first person on a first computer operated by said first person; stores a first image data of said first agent on said first computer; stores a second image data of a second agent being kept by second person on said first computer; displays said first agent on a first screen connected to said first computer based on said first image data and said first agent parameter; and wherein said first agent parameter is sent to said first computer through a communication network using E-mail.

120. (New) A computer readable medium for providing a virtual agent wherein a first agent parameter is stored in a first storage device, said first agent parameter controlling a first virtual agent kept by a first person;

wherein said first agent parameter is transferred from said first storage device to a first memory for controlling said first agent at a first computer operated by said first person; and

wherein said first agent parameter is sent from said first memory to a second computer remote from both said first storage and said first computer through a communication network using an E-mail.

121. (New) A computer readable medium for providing a virtual agent wherein a first agent parameter at first computer operated by a first person is sent to a second computer remote from said first computer through a communication network using E-mail, wherein said second computer is operated by a second person and said first agent parameter controls a first agent kept by said first person;

wherein said first agent parameter sent from said second computer is received using said first computer;

wherein a second agent parameter sent from second computer is received using said first computer, said second agent parameter controlling a second virtual agent kept by said second person; and

wherein a received said second agent parameter is sent to said second computer using said first computer.

122. (New) A computer readable medium for providing a virtual agent using an E-mail wherein said medium detects one or more events corresponding to a first virtual agent and the behavior of said first virtual agent is determined by a plurality of first agent parameters;

said plurality of first agent parameters are updated based on a current first agent parameter with each detected event such that the behavior of said first virtual agent is continuously modified with each detected event; and

wherein said events include an interaction between said first virtual agent and a second virtual agent controlled by a second agent parameter and an interaction between said first virtual agent and an operation by an operator.

123. (New) A computer readable medium for providing an agent wherein an agent parameter which is configured to determine a behavior of agent adapted to deliver E-mail is randomly generated; and wherein said agent is stored in a memory device.

124. (New) A computer readable medium for providing an agent wherein the medium stores a first agent software;

wherein an agent parameter controlling a behavior of an agent is stored;

wherein said first agent software is executed using said agent parameter to control the behavior of the agent; and

wherein said agent parameter is sent using E-mail to a remote computer storing a second agent software which is substantially the same as said first agent software so